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ABSTRACT

This module provides information on identification and characteristics of disadvantaged students and the requirements of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act. The guide includes a list of definitions and uses a question-and-answer format to define disadvantaged students (academically and economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient), provide guidelines for identification, list types of assessment instruments, and discuss use of individual vocational education plans. Nine references are included. (KC)

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TITLE: IDENTIFICATION OF THE DISADVANTAGED

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TARGET POPULATION: TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND COUNSELORS WORKING WITH A DISADVANTAGED POPULATION.

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ABSTRACT: Information is given on identification and characteristics of disadvantaged students and the requirements of the Carl Perkins Act in relation to these students entering vocational education classes.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Overview

Whether they live in the inner city or rural America, disadvantaged youth face many severe problems. The difficulties of daily living are overwhelming. Studies indicate that socioeconomic status, large family size, overcrowded living, and rural isolation are related to delinquency, poor educational attainment and behavior problems in school. These problems have lead to alienation from the educational mainstream, dropping out of school, unemployment and poverty.

There are no easy solutions to the problems of the disadvantaged. Legislation has addressed the needs of the disadvantaged but, despite these attempts, enrollment by disadvantaged individuals in programs that could benefit them is low. The current plight of the disadvantaged may get worse as graduation requirements increase and the need for technical skills escalates. The need for early identification and placement in appropriate programs is vital (Wircenski, J. L., Are We Really Serving Disadvantaged Youth?).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. WHO ARE DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS?

A. Disadvantaged students are those individuals (other than handicapped) who have economic or academic disadvantages which require special services and assistance to enable them to succeed in vocational education programs. This includes individuals who are:

1. Members of economically disadvantaged families;
2. Migrants;
3. Individuals with limited English proficiency; and
4. Dropouts or identified potential dropouts from secondary school.

The following criteria is used to identify academically and economically disadvantaged and limited English proficient individuals:

Academically Disadvantaged

1. Scores on a standardized achievement or aptitude test are below the 25th percentile.
2. Secondary school grades are below 2.0 on a 4.0 scale.
3. Minimal academic competencies are not attained.

Economically Disadvantaged

Individuals with low income determined by data such as

1. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).
2. Free or reduced lunch.
3. Pell Grant.

Limited English Proficiency

1. Not born in the United States.
2. Whose native language is other than English.
3. From environments where a language other than English is dominant.
4. American Indians and Alaskan native students from environments where a language other than English has a significant impact on their level of English language proficiency (Federal Register, Friday, August 16, 1986).

Q. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISADVANTAGED STUDENT?

A. Disadvantaged students often have problems participating in educational programs. The background of the student is often the greatest contributor to the problem. Disadvantaged students do not have the same opportunities as other students and therefore lack experiences on which to build a solid educational foundation. Some of the typical characteristics of disadvantaged students as identified by Sarkees and Scott (1985) are:

1. poor foundation in basic skills (reading, math, communication skills);
2. low educational levels;
3. low aspirational levels;
4. high rate of absenteeism;
5. rebellious attitudes;
6. poor health and nutrition;
7. negative attitudes toward school, authority, and the law;
8. lack of job-seeking and job-retention skills;
9. lack of exposure to career development information and related activities;
10. lack of worker role models;
11. no provisions for home study;
12. lack of encouragement from parents regarding educational progress or goals;
13. home environment that may be affected by hunger, unpaid debts, alcoholism, drug addiction, and/or overcrowded conditions (environment detrimental to self-growth and development);
14. low self-esteem;
15. language as a barrier to communication in school (low vocabulary and concept development);
16. lack of communication between teachers and parents;
17. lack of basic needs (food, safety, belongingness);
18. poor economic conditions; and
19. lack of access to transportation.

Q. WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR IDENTIFICATION OF A DISADVANTAGED STUDENT?

A. The guidelines used to identify disadvantaged individuals vary from state to state (Sarkees & Scott, 1986). The criteria to be kept in mind is that the disadvantaged student cannot succeed or cannot be expected to succeed in a regular vocational program without assistance. Vocational teachers are becoming more familiar with the needs of special needs learners and their associated learning problems. Through better understanding of the learning problems involved, more success and satisfaction can be achieved by the student and teacher.

Q. WHAT TYPE OF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS CAN BE USED IN THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS?

A. The disadvantaged student may have the same types of academic, social, motor, communication, and independent living skill deficits as the handicapped student. The disadvantaged student's records, however, may have a complete void in assessment information. Part of the reason for this void is that laws prior to Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 (P.L. 98-524) did not require any assurances in the area of assessment for the disadvantaged. The Vocational Planner's Guide for the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 (1986) states the following assurance related to the assessment of the disadvantaged:

> The interests, abilities and special needs of each disadvantaged student will be assessed with respect to successfully completing a vocational education program. The assessment process shall be designed to determine the vocational potential by observing and measuring the interests, abilities, and special needs, and using these results to assist in formulating a realistic vocational plan (p. 10).

A battery of tests should be selected that will evaluate the student's interest, abilities and special needs. Each student should receive a set of tests that reflect their individual needs. Similar to the evaluation process used with handicapped students, disadvantaged students should be administered only the tests that will be useful in eliciting information about their deficit areas. A team effort should be used to select the most appropriate instruments.

Q. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE IVEP IN THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS?

A. It is critical that the student be assessed prior to developing the IVEP. There is not a federal mandate for individualized plans for disadvantaged students but it is important for educators to realize that the assessments used for disadvantaged students are not to be given merely to provide a record of an assessment to satisfy state assurances. Assessments should also provide meaningful information to be utilized in formulating the

Individualized Vocational Education Plan (IVEP). The IVEP is developed for the disadvantaged student and follows the same general format as the IEP pertaining to the vocational goals and objectives. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recommends that an IVEP be developed for all disadvantaged students in vocational education. The IVEP should clearly state the following:

1. Documentation of eligibility for early entry.
2. Reason/justification for early entry, including the assessment of the student.
3. The program the student is going to enter, and the long range vocational goal.
4. Goals and objectives the student should be able to accomplish in a given time period as they relate to the long range goals.
5. A tentative listing of vocational related courses and other courses to meet the student's overall education plan.
6. Support (resource) services needed (including any modifications or adaptions necessary for the student to succeed).
7. A transition plan for the student (long-range plans for placement or further training).

In addition, the IVEP may include the following recommended components:

1. Academic achievement (test scores, grades, classroom performance, etc.).
2. Information on vocational interests, aptitudes and other abilities.
3. Student strengths and weaknesses.

SOURCE: Assessment: A Key to Appropriate Program Placement (1986).

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